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Ghanaian promotes Africa through AFRICUSSION

.... an International collaboration through percussion in far away Taiwan.

The drift toward globalization is taken a new twist in far away Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, Republic of China in Asia this month, where three continents, Asia, Africa and the North America are sharing the same stage to celebrate diversity and global peace through percussion music. The programme titled AFRICUSSION is a code for global dialogue and discussion between Asia and Africa as well as North America.

Representing Africa and of course Ghana is a United States based Ghanaian lecturer and master percussionist Harold Akyeampong aka Okyerema Akyampon, a native of Mankessim in the Central Region.

Mr. Akyeampong is the President of the Ghana Percussive Arts Society, the first chapter in Africa of the world renowned music service organization, the Percussive Arts Society, which has chapters all over the world with headquarters in the United States.

Mr. Akyeampong, manages the Obrumankoma, Odapagyan & Oson Traditionals of Mankessim, a total theater group that has been mesmerizing audience with its dazzling performances throughout Ghana. He is also the Founder and CEO of the International Centre for African Culture and Arts (ICACA), an International Cultural and Development organization that is committed to the preservation, development and promotion of African culture and the arts all over the world. Mr. Akyeampong is serving as an aggressive cultural exponent of Ghana through his master teaching and performance in the United States and around the world through his Arts in Education programme in New York called KUSUM AGORO Multicultural Arts Project. Through his hard work, he has recently been appointed the chairman of the West African Drumming Committee, a subsidiary of the World Percussion Committee within the Percussive Arts Society, which also has another Ghanaian, Professor Pascal Younge as the chairman.

Mr. Akyeampong who credits his rise to fame to a number of Ghanaian artistic personalities mentioned Dr. Daniel Amponsah alias Egya Koo Nimoh and Mr. Frank Mensah, both of the Centre for Cultural Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Old Nii Sowah of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana as his mentors.

Asia is represented by the world renowned percussion group the JU PERCUSSION GROUP(JPG). JPG was founded by percussionist Tzong-Ching Ju in 1986, was the first percussion ensemble established in Taiwan. It consists of 6 talented percussionists 4 interns and one composer in residence. The members who all have advanced University degrees possess great skills in playing Western percussion music and Chinese gong-drum music. Other forms of Asian traditional music have an important place in their repertoire as well. The JPG give more than 100 performances each year including concerts, workshops and teachers' seminars and have an audience of approximately 150,000 annually.

Since its establishment, the JPG has performed in Asia, Europe, Australia and America. In recent years, the touring

schedule has kept expanding. They have performed and hosted the world leading percussion ensembles at the Taipei International Percussion Convention (TIP 1993,1996,1999 and 2002). JPG has released 15 highly acclaimed recordings. They have earned two Golden Tripod Awards and numerous prizes in Asia and abroad.

Though, yet to visit Africa, through this collaboration there is hope that it will become a reality one day. JU as they are popularly known is not only a performing group but it encompasses a foundation that oversees its music school that has 21 percussion schools all over Taiwan. In addition, the group's arrangements of numerous traditional Chinese /Taiwanese folk tunes and children's song contribute greatly to steady growing popularity of percussion music in Taiwan.

America is represented by the famous African American Dance Company, the HARAMBEE Dance Company. Under the artistic and executive directorships of Sandella Mallory, and Frank Mallory, a versatile percussionist/performer and a New York City Television Producer of DANCE NEW YORK programme, the Company is wooing audience with its superb and spectacular performances. As one of the most sought after dance companies in the United States, HARAMBEE commands a high respect for their artistic flair, creativity and class choreography.


According to Mr. Akyeampong, AFRICUSSION programme is taken place from the 22nd to 26th May, 2005 and is to be performed in four major cities including the Taipei National Theater. Mr. Akyeampong who just returned to the United States last week from Taipei for pre-tour workshop and rehearsals with JU, said everything is in order and nothing is being left to chance for this production.


In an interview at the Taipei's number one radio station, PRS with host Chi Lun, Mr. Akyeampong speaking through an interpreter, Bella Liu said that such collaborations are very important because it promotes international relations, foster greater understanding and global appreciation of people and culture. He took the opportunity to appeal to the African government, particularly Ghana to seize on this link to establish more formal cultural exchange program with Asia for mutual benefits. He said Taiwan has a lot for Africa to learn from, in exchange for the benefit from our cultural experience.

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